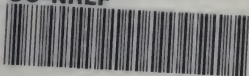


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LETTERS

TO

A BROTHER,

ON PRACTICAL SUBJECTS.

By a Clergyman.

LOWELL:

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GIFT
Langfeld

INTRODUCTION.

The following letters were commenced with the design of explaining some of the simple truths of the Gospel to the mind of a younger brother in the hope that they might be of essential service to him in a *practical* respect.

It has since been a matter of serious inquiry with me, whether the minds of the young have been sufficiently instructed and enlightened on the subjects embraced in the letters. The result of my inquiries is, a firm conviction that, while the world abounds with story books and with

toys for children, there are very few *religious* works of a thorough, *practical* kind. A knowledge of this fact has induced me to throw these letters, in a printed form, before the public, with the hope that they may influence some youthful minds to embrace cordially the religion of the Saviour.

The *plan* is, in many respects, *new*, and the truths contained in the letters are presented *singly* that the mind may distinctly apprehend one truth before it undertakes to grapple with another. It is believed that, in this way, more vivid impressions of duty will be received than in any other way. The exhibition of several important and fundamental truths in a single letter would confuse the mind so that it would be able to distinguish no one truth clearly. The colors of the solar ray cannot be distinguished when commingled, but when separated by the prism

each can be distinguished from every other.

The *doctrinal* views contained in this little volume, are, I believe, accordant with the views of evangelical Christians generally. I have studied to make my directions and explanations conform to the word of God. The letters were not written for *criticism*, but for *practical* use.

It may be said that many of the illustrations, contained in this work, are too *difficult* to be understood by those for whose *particular* use it has been published. In reply, I have only to say to the individual who thinks so, place these letters in the hands of any intelligent child of twelve years, and when he has finished the reading of it, question him in regard to the meaning of the several parts of it, and you will find that you have mistaken the power of a child's intellect.

Most youths of from ten years old and upwards will understand all in these letters that it is necessary for them to know in order to secure their object.

Let parents give a copy of this work to each of their children with the prayer that it may awaken their attention and be accompanied by the influences of the Holy Spirit and that it may result in their conversion to God.

Hitherto the souls of the young have been too much neglected. It has been too generally thought that efforts for the conversion of children between the ages of six and fourteen years, are useless and hopeless. The times are changed, and the feelings of Christians have changed with them. The importance and success of efforts made in behalf of children of the ages above mentioned, can no longer be doubted.

The influence of the examples of *Nathan W. Dickerman* and *John Mooney Mead*, has been powerfully felt and will be till the end of time. It has excited parents to greater faithfulness and will result, probably, in the future salvation of thousands of children and youth.

That this work may help the efforts of Christians to instruct the young, and to unfold the truths of the gospel to them, is my earnest prayer!

To all impenitent sinners, of whatever age or attainments, this little book may afford instruction. The way of reconciliation with God is, I believe, truly and faithfully traced; and the consequences of a neglect to embrace the religion of Jesus are honestly set forth. If any, who are now delaying to make preparation for heaven, and are "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath," shall be indu-

ced, by these humble efforts, to repent of their sins and to turn unto the Lord, the author will have occasion to bless God that he has not labored in vain.

Lowell, Dec. 20, 1832.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

Your long residence in my family has interested me much in your welfare, spiritual and eternal. And I know of no better way to express that interest than to spend what leisure moments I can command in writing down some thoughts which *may be* of special use to you in your future life.

My object is not now to *make rules* for the regulation of life, but to dwell upon some points of great *practical* importance—to elucidate and enforce some subjects in which you ought to feel yourself particularly interested.

In this letter I wish to make you feel yourself *entirely destitute of love to God*—

in other words, that you are *completely under the dominion of sin*. I say *you*, because, from your own confession, your heart is still in a state of nature—having experienced no change from sin to holiness.

It would be easy for me to adduce many passages of Scripture to prove that the heart of every man is entirely under subjection to sin, unless it has been renovated in the manner which I shall describe in another letter. But as one passage, the meaning of which is well ascertained, is as good as a thousand, *because it is the truth of God*, I shall spare you the trouble of examining many.

When David exclaimed, “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,” (Ps. 51:5) there can be no doubt that he intended to express the native depravity of his heart. And when the prophet, Jeremiah, said “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked,” (Jer. 17:9.) it is very plain that he meant to affirm the ut-

ter depravity of mankind in a state of unregeneracy. But the passage which I wish you to observe more particularly, is John 3: 3, where Christ says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Now if a man *naturally* has any holiness in his heart, Christ would not have made such a requisition. For the change, which he demands, as necessary to salvation, is one from sin to holiness. The holiness, which supervenes upon regeneration, is indeed *partial*, but is capable of growth—expansion—and it *does* so expand till it becomes perfect in heaven. Why then may not the holiness, which we have supposed to exist in the *heart, by nature*, grow and expand till it becomes perfect? And then may not a perfectly holy being be admitted to the kingdom of heaven? You see, therefore, that the requisition of a new heart in order to salvation, would be unmeaning if that, which is to be obtained by a new heart, exists already in the sinner. The Scripture argument is, therefore, clear, and

the evidence conclusive that people, *in a state of nature*, are *entirely destitute of holiness*—completely under the power of sin.

You will see also much evidence of corruption of heart in unregenerate men, in their conduct. From the first periods of their moral existence they pursue after the world and seek not after God. In the expressive language of David, “They go astray as soon as they be born,” (Psalm 58: 3.) You cannot find *one* instance of obedience to God in children whose hearts are in a state of nature. Indeed, such is the universal corruption of the human heart, that we do not, in any case, expect the exhibition of holiness. Who, among your playmates, *is*, and *has been*, from his infancy, devoted to God? Do you know of any one who, unless converted by the Spirit of God, loves to pray and talk about religion and thinks more about God than about any thing else? And *why* can you not find such an one? Because no one exists who possesses such a character.

But perhaps you will say that many of your associates are *amiable*—that they are kind to each other—obedient to their parents—and do no outward acts of wickedness. I believe fully this statement. But all these amiable traits of character *may* and *do* often exist *without* any holiness in the heart.

Suppose now, that a parent should say to his child, “If you will love me and do all that I tell you to do, and give me an account every day of what you have been doing during the day, and ask my forgiveness when you have done wrong, I will give you, when you are twenty years old, all I possess, which amounts to many thousand dollars. But if you do not obey me in these particulars, you must look out for your support from some other quarter, for I shall not give you one cent of my property.”

The child rejoices at the prospect of the happiness which he believes just before him. He expects to obtain possession of his father’s large estates. But, in the

mean time, a thousand childish sports occupy his mind. He feels under obligation to his father, but cannot bear the restraints imposed upon him. He thinks more of his associates and of his play than he thinks of his parent. By degrees he neglects to go to him daily with an account of his conduct—disobeys every command which relates to his duty to his father and loves him only as he supplies his wants and as he expects from him a rich inheritance. Still he loves every body else—deals justly with all—is kind to his companions—beloved by every one that knows him. Twenty years of his life are at length passed, and his father calls him to his presence, in order to reckon with him. The son comes with *some* misgivings, it is true, but confirmed in the expectation of his father's possessions by the thought that his *kindness to others* amply compensated for his want of obedience to his father. How is he astonished, then, to hear from the paternal lips, "Thou canst have no part in my possessions. I

had fondly hoped that the motives to obedience would have been sufficient to induce thee to submit to my commands, but as they have failed to do it, I disinherit thee forever !”

“But,” says the disobedient son, “Have I not, by my conduct *towards others*, gained their esteem and love ? Have I not aided the helpless—relieved the distressed—had compassion on the poor—which you have always allowed to be right and which every body loves me for ?”

“Yes, my son, you have done all this, and this was right. But where have you exhibited your love for him who bare you and supported you and promised you vast wealth on condition of your obedience to him ? Had I no claims to your regard ? Must you neglect the only being on earth to whom you owe most ? And then will you expect to be *rewarded* by the very individual towards whom you have shown *no respect at all* ? Go from my presence ! For, though I weep over your disgrace,

justice will not permit me to alleviate your wretchedness !”

Do you not perceive, now, that all the kindness and love of that child to *others* was, in fact, no evidence that he loved his *father* ? Was not his heart, so far as his father was concerned, *entirely* destitute of love ? You must acknowledge it.

Now this illustration will show you what I mean when I say that all acts of benevolence and kindness—the possession of the most amiable qualities of human nature—are not evidences of true love to God. They do not prove that the heart is not *entirely* destitute of holiness. We know that there are many who possess all these traits of character who are yet opposed—bitterly opposed to the true character of God. If a person has not love to God—if his soul does not swell with gratitude to Him for all he has done to save his soul—rely upon it, he is under the *complete* dominion of sin—he is *entirely* *depraved*.

I hope, my dear brother, that you are, by this time, convinced that mankind, *in a state of nature*, are utterly destitute of the love of God or completely depraved. And if so, I know you will not try to escape from the inevitable conclusion to which I am brought, that *you* are living without holiness and without God in the world! The solemn truth that you are, in heart, utterly destitute of affection for the only Being in the universe who *ought* to command your *supreme* love, should lead you to *feel* your guilt. You stand in a relation to God at once dangerous and alarming. It is on His arm that you must lean for the support of your natural life. If he removes his sustaining hand, your soul will escape from its mortal tenement and go away alone into eternity. And have you no fears respecting the final issue of your apostacy? Have you no fear of that God whom you have never loved and towards whom you have not a single right affection? Reflect upon your situation as you close this letter—a creature

of God—sustained and blessed in a thousand ways by Him—yet perfectly void of love to Him—nay, evidently *opposed* to His character and laws. It may do you good, thus to look at your true character in the light in which heaven looks upon it. It may prepare you to appreciate, in a measure, the *reasonableness of God's anger* towards all those who are in your situation. That God is thus offended with all unregenerate men will be the subject of my next letter. Commending you to the grace of God, I remain, as ever,

Your affectionate brother,

LETTER II.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

In my last letter I attempted to show you the strange position which you hold in relation to God. If, on the review of your past life, you are convinced of the fact that your heart is totally void of love to God—completely depraved, you are prepared to hear, without surprise, that you are *in a state of condemnation—exposed to the wrath of God.*

The language of God's law is stern and unyielding, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. 3: 10.) "The soul that *sinneth*, it shall die. (Ezek. 18: 4.) Now these are plain passages and you will perceive, by them, that the curse rests upon you who

have broken the law ten thousand times. There is a verse in the New Testament which confirms this fact, "He that believeth not *is condemned already.*" I will add only one other passage, but it is an awfully impressive one, "God is angry with the wicked every day." (Ps. 7: 11.)

The evidence from the Bible is, therefore, conclusive, that Jehovah regards you as justly the object of his wrath. And you must be sensible, my brother, that you *deserve* the infliction of the severest punishment for your guilt. Why should not God feel displeased with one who has spent *twelve years* of his life in continued apostacy and impenitence? *One sin* is enough to lay you under the curse of the law, for, "Cursed is every one that continueth not *in all* things," &c. Now, then, if you had committed *but one* sin and had lived, the rest of your life, in *perfect obedience* to the commands of God, you would not be able to claim acquittance from the curse. How could you make reparation for *that one sin*? Suppose you should

break some important law of your country to which is attached the penalty of imprisonment for life. Would your *past* good conduct or your *future* perfect adherence to the laws of the country atone for *that one failure*? You ought to have failed in no one point; and, having failed, you cannot live so perfectly as to make up for that failure.

A king once made a law that no one should pass the limits between his and his enemy's country on the penalty of perpetual banishment to a far distant land. From this penalty *there should be no reprieve*. It chanced, that one of his best and most useful subjects, in a moment of thoughtlessness, and in the heat of the chase, pursued a deer into the borders of the enemy. The matter is reported to the king. With a heavy heart he calls the culprit into his presence, and says, "You, like others, are amenable to the laws of the empire and, with a full knowledge of those laws, you have broken the one to which the penalty of banishment is affix-

ed. You must submit to your punishment. To-morrow, you are to leave my realms forever !” What can the offender say to the execution of the sentence ? Does he plead that his whole conduct previously had been unexceptionable—that he had never before been in fault ? The *fact* is admitted—but the stability of the throne would be destroyed, if pardon should be granted contrary to the express previous declaration that there should be *no reprieve*.

So, if you had committed but a single sin during your whole life—*that* would not secure you from the execution of the appalling sentence, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” The sentence of death would still be on the records of God against you—to be accomplished in God’s own time.

But, my dear brother, if the wrath of God lies on you for a *single* sin—how great that wrath increased as it is by the continued guilt of *many years* ! All your sins are laid up with God and will be publish-

ed to the world at the judgment day. How solemn the thought that even *now*, while I am penning this letter, your soul is condemned to everlasting woe! That is terrific language, "He that believeth not *is* condemned ALREADY!" (John 3: 18.)

No *new* sentence is to be pronounced upon you—that which is upon you *now* is to be *executed*. *That* is all. While you are engaged in your sinful pastimes and follies, remember, I entreat you, that you are a living monument of wrath—that you are now enjoying a respite from punishment similar to that of the prisoner whose days are numbered and the time of whose execution is fixed. The sentence of death has been passed upon him, but the time for its accomplishment is delayed.

God has uttered the sentence of death eternal upon you, and it is through his forbearance that you have not experienced the commencement of its execution. But your days are all numbered. Your respite from the awful penalty of your sin will soon be ended. Death will termi-

nate it. Unless, before that time, you find a remedy for which the law does not provide, you will feel forever the wrath of God upon your immortal soul !

You may, indeed, think that God is too strict in maintaining His law with such unbending firmness and with such unyielding severity. But how otherwise could He sustain, in dependance upon Him and in unbroken order, the millions of intelligent beings upon His footstool ? If He should permit a law to be broken *with impunity* to which He had attached *a specific and certain penalty*, what confusion—what anarchy would ensue ! There would be no obedience, if disobedience should go unpunished ; especially, after God had affirmed that it should be punished without failure. And do you suppose that, in order to secure the happiness of a few wretched and sinful persons, God will permit His wide dominions to be coursed by treachery, anarchy and ruin ? Never. Though heaven and earth pass away, His words shall never pass away. His threat-

ening against the sinner will never be recalled, even though eternity is the term of the punishment.

You see, therefore, my dear brother, that the curse of God, that remains upon you, is a fearful thing. And what renders the fact still more serious is, that it rests upon you *justly*. It is for *sin* that you are condemned—not for a few *errors* which *could not be foreseen or averted*. It is not for the guilt of one day or of one week or of one year, but for the depravity of a whole life that you are soon to suffer the execution of a most dreadful punishment, unless it is averted in some way of which the law knows nothing.

Nor is your case a solitary one. You are surrounded with youthful companions, nearly all of whom are, doubtless, exposed to the same wrath which impends over you. For they are sinners—without the love of God in their hearts—entirely destitute of holiness. God is angry with *all* such. And they are all equally exposed to the dreadful penalty of a broken law.

Will you not read to them this letter and try to show them that it is best for them to look into their condition and to see the worst of their case ? It will not alleviate *your* miseries to know that *others* are alike suffering the punishment of their sins. It will, on the contrary, enhance your wretchedness, as you will see by a moment's consideration.

Suppose that you should be attacked with some dreadful disease that should render you wretched and hopeless, would it be any relief to you to know that many of your associates are in the same condition ? Would it comfort you to see one after another brought into the same room with you, all writhing in the extremity of their anguish ? O no ! it would surely give keenness to the edge of your own sorrows. Especially would this be the case, if *your* conduct or *your* wickedness were the guilty *cause* of their sickness and their pain.

The guilt of many of your young friends may have been greatly encreased *through*

your wicked example. Your evil influence may have led them on—may have encouraged them to continue in sin, till they are more wicked and guilty by far than they would otherwise have been. Of course their misery—the wrath of God which is on them—will be indefinitely increased by *your* means. Will you be comforted, then, when you are meeting the execution of the awful penalty due to sin, by seeing those, who have been thus sustained by your example in sin, take their places by your side in the world of despair? Will not the very sight of your injured companions bring additional anguish to your bosoms? *That* will be an agonized reflection, “them I have helped to ruin forever!”

Seek not, therefore, to brace yourself up in impenitence by the thought, that many others are in the same case with yourself, and will share, if you perish, your punishment. Let the solemn facts, which I have stated in this letter, bear upon your mind with their proper force.

You must confess the justice of God in uttering the sentence of death upon you. Your own heart will, doubtless, acknowledge its guilt. You are convinced that no love to God has ever swelled your bosom. It cannot be wrong, then, for God to pour out the vials of his wrath upon one who, *acknowledgedly*, has filled up his life with sin. Your condition is one of immense hazard. Oh, forget not that the execution of the tremendous penalty of the law delays, only till death shall hurry your soul into eternity! Think what must then be the desolation—the woe—the everlasting woe—that shall come over you! I leave you to your own thoughts and pray God that you may deeply realize the justice of the doom which hangs over you.

I am with many prayers for your welfare,
Your affectionate brother,

LETTER III.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I trust you have weighed well the remarks which I made in my last letter respecting your condition as a sinner exposed to the severest displeasure of a holy God. The subject of my present communication will have suggested itself, doubtless, to your mind before this. It must have occurred to you with great force, that *it is a duty you owe to God and to yourself to repent immediately of your sins.*

The duty of repentance results principally from your relation to God. He is your Creator. It is His arm that has ever sustained you in existence, and upon which you must depend for your future support. You have freely refused to give Him the love which was His due. You have un-

reasonably and voluntarily disobeyed Him. There was no compulsion used—no force—no deception by God. Your sins were all the result of your perfect freedom, else they would not have been rightly called *sins*. There can be no guilt which has not been contracted in the free exercise of a free mind.

You can, therefore, plead no excuse for living, as you have done, in the neglect of God's laws and in opposition to His expressed will. You are, probably, sensible that all excuses of this kind are vain and will not be accepted by Jehovah—nay, that they *cannot* be accepted by Him without a forfeiture of his noblest attributes.

The duty of repentance would seem to be a given point which need not be discussed. If you have disobeyed God who, by creation, has a perfect right to command you and to enforce obedience, what can be more called for than *immediate repentance*?

A father tells his son to remain at home during his absence which would

continue till night. As soon as his father is gone, the son says to himself, "It will never be discovered if I take my gun and spend the afternoon in hunting." He, accordingly, follows the bent of his inclinations and returns at an early hour. But his conscience troubles him. He feels that he has done wrong—that he ought not to have disobeyed his father's command. He considers that his father has a perfect right to command him and that he has treated him very unkindly in return for all the goodness which he had received from him. He goes to him, as soon as he returns, and, with an appearance which shows him sincere, confesses his sin and begs his father's forgiveness. Here was *repentance*. And what could be more natural than that such a course should be pursued by the son who was thoroughly convinced that he had sinned and exposed himself to the just punishment which his father might see fit to inflict? Would not an increase of guilt have been con-

tracted, if the repentance had not been exercised?

Do *you* not see then, my dear brother, that it is your indispensable duty to turn from your sins—to repent at once of your iniquity? You have broken the commands of a kind parent. I have tried to show you your *guilt* in so doing. Ought you not, therefore, to repent sincerely and go to God whom you have offended and plead for pardon? If you do not pursue this course your sins will be increased—your guilt rendered immensely greater.

Nor will it be enough for you to grieve that you have sinned, simply because there is a retribution coming—because eternal misery is threatened. This is to be sorry, not for sin as committed against a kind and merciful God, but for the results of sin—for the impending punishment. Suppose the son, above mentioned, had, on returning from his hunting excursion, reflected upon the punishment which his father had threatened in case of disobe-

dience and, simply in view of *that*, had regretted that he did not stay at home, would such regret be sincere repentance? Would it have been all that the sin of disobedience called for? No. He ought to have been sorry that he had not regarded his father with more affection than to be willing to disobey him.

So, if you feel aright in reference to your sin, you will be sorry that you have offended God by it—that you have not more regarded his commands which are all right—holy and good. To repent because you have done something for which you expect punishment, is not true penitence. The feeling of your heart should be, “I have sinned against my Creator and Preserver and it grieves me to think how I have abused his love.”

But perhaps you will ask, “Will my repentance secure God’s blessing? Will He pardon my sins if I repent of them? In other words, shall I be reinstated into His favour?”

And what has your duty to do, my broth-

er, with the negative or affirmative answer to such questions? Does not your duty, in regard to repentance for your voluntary sin against God, remain the same whether you are ever to receive or expect forgiveness or not? Does the fact, that God refuses to pardon your guilt, change the nature of that guilt? Is not its enormity the same?—its demerits, are they not precisely the same?

In the case supposed, if the son had been convinced that he had done wrong in breaking the command of a kind and indulgent father, and yet was doubtful whether he should repent or not, because he was in doubt as to his father's forgiveness of his disobedience, he would have exhibited a heart totally unfit to receive the blessing of forgiveness. If his feelings were such as they should have been, he would have been melted into contrition in view of his *sin*, not in view of his father's *forgiveness* of that sin. Nay, I go further, and affirm that his obligations to repent would have been the same, if he

had known that he should not receive his father's pardon. *His* duty could not have been affected by any course pursued by his father.

You will see then, my dear brother, that the inquiry of a sinner against God should not be, "will He forgive me if I repent?" Such a question ought not to be agitated by him. It is his duty to be broken-hearted for sin, whatever God's course in relation to him may be. Even if he could know, to a certainty, that for the sins he has committed God would cast him off forever, his duty would be the same. He has done wrong—he ought to be sorry for it. He could not do less than this, were it an enemy whom he had wrongfully offended.

Your duty, therefore, is clear and explicit. You owe it to God, whom you have offended, to repent and turn from your evil way. Whatever becomes of you—whether God pardons your sins or executes the sentence of death upon you in its fullest extent—you have wronged him in a thousand ways and you ought to be sorry—

sincerely, heartily, sorry for it. If you are not, it exhibits an alarming hardness of heart and a stupidity of soul to the demerits of sin truly affecting.

But I stated, at the commencement of this letter, not only that you owed it to *God* to repent of your sins, but that you owed it to *yourself*.

There is a conscience in man which is rarely so seared as to be entirely unsusceptible to excitement. It is a monitor appointed by God over human thoughts and actions. Now, whenever you do wrong, you doubtless feel a conviction of guilt that troubles you. And as you are continually engaged in sin, your mind is continually agitated with fears and is the prey of remorse. Now, why is this, if not to show you the necessity of feeling your guilt so as to lead you to repentance? Repentance of sin will be to you a relief. It will take from your mind a heavy burden. You will, at least, not be chargeable with *the guilt of impenitence*. You will show that you are not, at least, *indifferent* to

your sins. You owe it to *yourself* to repent.

I must illustrate what I have now said by one more reference to the undutiful Son. Suppose the Son had hardened his heart and felt no penitence for his sin of disobedience and had concealed the truth from his Father when he returned, would he not have been much more unhappy than if he had repented of it and confessed it to his Father? And if he had neglected to confess it for several days and then had come to the resolution of doing it and executed his resolution, would not a heavy weight have been thrown off his mind?

Thus you will find great relief, if you are sorry for your sins and if (as is implied in repentance) you confess them to God and beg his forgiveness.

I hope that you are already convinced of the truth of the statements I have now made. Your mind will yield, I am persuaded, to the firm conviction that you need to repent of your sins—that your du-

ty to God, whom you have injured and to yourself, requires it. Look directly at your *duty*. You have done wrong. Ask no questions in regard to the *result* of your repentance. Be assured that, whatever be your destiny hereafter, you cannot turn too soon from the evil of your ways. You cannot be too sensible to your guilt in the sight of God—or too broken-hearted in view of it. It is true, the sentence of wrath is gone forth against you—you are under the curse, and the arm of justice is lifted to destroy you forever; and the question, how you shall find a refuge from that wrath, is an important question. But your *first* business is to feel your guilt—to be humbled under a sense of it—and to repent of it, with the resolution to forsake it forever. This is your solemn duty—your first duty. You cannot delay the work a single day without incurring great guilt in addition to that already laid up in the remembrance of God against you. Will you not, my brother, attend to the claims of God upon your repent-

ance *immediately*. Be assured, it will ease your own mind of a heavy burden. And even if it does not, the claim ought to be met and that without delay. You may expect to hear from me again soon.

Your affectionate brother,

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

In my last letter, I endeavored to convince you that it is your duty to repent, simply because you have done wrong—because your conduct has been rebellious against God. I hope you *have* repented—that, upon the conviction of your guilt, you saw your duty and fulfilled it. I hope, however, that your repentance is not grounded on the supposition that it will *purchase* pardon, for, then, your repentance is not genuine. True repentance is, as I have already shown you, sorrow for *sin*, not for its *results*.

And my object in this communication is to show *the utter inefficacy of repentance to atone for sins in reference to which it is exercised.*

You need not be startled at an assertion which renders the sinner's case so apparently hopeless, nor need you exclaim, "who then can be saved?" (Matt. 19: 25.) I am not now bound to answer such a question. It does not belong to the topic of this letter. My present object is simply to prove or substantiate the fact, that *repentance cannot clear you from guilt*. No matter what startling inferences are drawn from it. The truth is still the same and it must be submitted to.

An atonement for sin cannot be made unless an equivalent is paid for the debt which has been contracted. Now, on your own acknowledgement, and as I have shown in a previous letter, you have broken God's law—not once or twice—but a thousand times. And the penalty, attached to the law for transgression, is *eternal death*. Suppose, then, upon consideration, that you feel deeply sensible of the guilt of your conduct and come to God with a penitent confession of your sin, will such penitence be an *equivalent* for

the debt? You have, if I may so speak, *borrowed*, or, more correctly, taken of God the affections of a whole life and devoted them to sin. How shall these affections be regained by God? What remuneration can you make? You cannot pay Him surely by living a more holy life henceforth, for *that* is your duty without taking into the account the past. It would have been your duty thus to live if you had never laid yourself under additional obligations by sin. Nor will the most sincere regret—the most hearty sorrow for your life of sin, cancel your debt to God. Does such sorrow affect a positive obligation? Can it obliterate the sense of guilt from your mind? Never. After repentance you will still feel as guilty—as deserving of the wrath of God as before.

A child disobeys his parents' commands and, afterwards, sees how wicked and unkind the act of disobedience was. He feels grieved that he has so done and confesses it to his parents. Now, how does that child feel in relation to his sin? Is

his conscience relieved? Has he made satisfaction? No; he still reflects upon his guilt and is sensible that he has made no reparation of a broken law. It still remains a truth and as serious a truth as ever that the commands of his parents were disobeyed by him. The guilt is in no degree, diminished by his sorrow for it.

So your penitence in view of your sin against a kind and merciful God will never, in the least, diminish the guilt of it. It will forever be true, that the law of God has been broken by you unkindly and rebelliously. No groans, nor tears, nor confessions will alter the debt you have contracted by sin. They can never atone for one transgression.

The law does not *demand* repentance of the infringer of it. It has nothing to do with it. If it were available in restoring innocence to one who has sinned by disobeying any of the commands of God, surely a promise to that effect would have been included in the law. But no such promise is made. So far then is repen-

tance from reinstating the transgressor in a condition of innocence—so far is it from satisfying the law, that *the law recognizes no such thing as repentance.*

Your sorrow for sin, then, my brother, gives you no advantage in regard to freedom from guilt. You stand still accused as a rebel against God and a transgressor of the law.

Neither is repentance, in itself, *a ground of pardon.* The sentence of the law against those who break it is *positive and unconditional.* “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” “Cursed is every one who *continueth* not in all things written in the book of the law to do them!” God’s word has gone forth that whoever breaks *one* command of the law shall perish miserably. Repentance *alone* cannot avail to hold unexecuted the sentence. Shall God forbear to inflict punishment on the infringers of his law which is backed by such tremendous penalties, merely because they are sorry for having so done? What will become of his veracity? Who would

fear God, if it was generally understood that He would forgive those who are sorry for their sins ? Either God is not a God of truth and integrity or He will not pardon the breach of His law for repentance *as a ground*. It is not an equivalent. So that the sentence of the law stands against you in full force even after repentance is exercised, unless it can be shown that an equivalent has been paid in some other way.

I might illustrate this truth by a familiar case which occurs to my mind. A certain man, not long since, forged a check upon one of our most respectable banks, for which he received 10,000 dollars which he soon put out of his hands in payment of his debts. It was providentially discovered, and the fraud was proved to have been committed by him. Meanwhile, on reflecting upon his crime, he felt a sense of guilt and repented that he had so done. He felt *truly* penitent for his sin. And when the sheriff was conducting him to prison—he exhibited eve-

ry mark of genuine sorrow for his wickedness. The magistrate, who had the power to pardon him, was convinced of his sincerity and believed that he was truly penitent. Yet when application was made to him, by a large number of respectable friends, for his release, he would not grant it. Now I ask *you*, if you suppose the *repentance* of that forger laid the magistrate under any *obligation* to pardon him! Did his penitence remove all difficulties in the way of his forgiveness? If so, then in every case, where there is evidence of repentance, pardon ought to be bestowed. On this principle many a murderer would escape the gallows, for many have truly repented of their crime. No; there are other questions to be considered than whether a criminal has repented or not? *Will the law permit his pardon? Will no injury result to community from it? Will not others become bold in sin in the hope of pardon if convicted?* “Will his penitence, (the magistrate may say) secure my justification, if I pardon one who, all are

convinced, is guilty, and on whom the law requires me to inflict a specific punishment?" You will perceive that these questions must be answered *satisfactorily*, before the culprit can safely be pardoned. And *even then*, there is, confessedly, no obligation broken if pardon is refused. If granted, it is a mere act of *mercy*. It may have been suggested, indeed, by the evidence which was given of repentance. Repentance may have been the *occasion* but not the *ground* of pardon.

Now God's laws were made for *intelligent* men. They were communicated, in substance, to Adam while in a state of holiness. All the motives, which can be conceived to influence a holy mind, were urged upon him, and that too while his heart was uncorrupted. Who does not see that for *him* to break the law of God was a crime of fearful magnitude and that his repentance, if genuine, could not, consistently, be accepted *as a reparation* of the broken law? All the descendants of Adam are subjected to the same holy and

perfect law, because no other less perfect law would consist with the holiness and perfection of God. And, although we are in circumstances less favorable to perfect obedience than those in which Adam was placed, yet no one can reasonably doubt that we have the ability (either natural or moral) to yield such obedience. If, then, contrary to our complete knowledge of duty, we commit sin, we lay ourselves, as I have before said, under the curse. And can we suppose that God is under the *necessity* of pardoning us, *because we repent*? It is not so. We must repent, because we have done wrong, but we must never suppose that it will be *the ground* or *reason* of our forgiveness. If it is a *condition* of pardon, it certainly is not *the reason* of it.

Now I know the tendency of the natural mind to look for given and advantageous results from all its movements. And if it cannot see an *intrinsic* value in *repentance* in reference to the security of some permanent good, it will discard the very

thought of it. But the reason is, it does not *feel* its guilt. It *may* have a *speculative* knowledge of it, but not an *efficient* knowledge. If the fact of a sinner's repentance *has* any value, it is a *factitious* value, that is to say, a value acquired by the occurrence of some other fact *foreign* to it. It will, as I have proved, never be admitted by God as a *ground* of justification or pardon.

You see then, my dear brother, that so far as our investigations have yet gone, you are in a most hopeless and desperate state. A broken law unrepaired, utters still against you its fearful curses. The mount of Sinai sends forth still its awful notes of alarm. No bow of hope arches the sky. Darkness and clouds are about the throne of God. Oh! what wrecks has sin made! What ruins are all around us! On the examination of your condition in relation to God, you find yourself a wretched sinner—whom no prayers—no tears—no penitence can de-

liver from the *guilt* of having broken the law a thousand times. No reparation of a single breach can you ever make. Repentance, so much your *duty* and so much your *privilege*, possesses no *merit*—atones for no sin—*will never be accepted as* THE REASON of salvation—or pardon. God has said himself, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” (Isa. 64: 6.) What, then, can you do? What refuge, then, is there for you from the full execution of all the woes threatened in the law? Let this thought fill your mind, that past guilt cannot be pardoned by repentance *as a ground*! Feel that you have brought yourself into a condition from which no human efforts can save you—a condition of wrath and final woe! And feel too, that it is a just punishment which impends over you and from which no earthly power can snatch you! Nor does the fearfulness of your condition release you from the performance of a single duty. Be sensible of your guilt and repent and confess your

sins to God which are your reasonable service. I shall write again soon.

Your affectionate brother,

John L. Billings
Chas. L. Loring

LETTER V.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

The question, which most naturally arises in view of statements and arguments like those contained in my four former letters, is a most solemn and interesting one. “*Is there no hope for me?*”

How *can* there be any hope for a sinner like you, or for any of the fallen race of man? Has not God uttered the curse? Is not the sentence of death eternal sealed with his name? And with *acknowledged justice* too? Who then can save you from the devouring fire? Who can redeem you from everlasting burnings? Solemn, momentous questions!

My dear brother, there is—there *is* hope. I rejoice to communicate the cheering intelligence. God, from His high throne,

seems even now commissioning his messengers of mercy to bring aid to your despairing soul. "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a RANSOM!" (Job 33: 24.) O! does not your soul glow with the thought that you are yet a prisoner of hope? That there is a power which can pour light into the dark prison in which you have been so long confined?

If the prisoner, who has long worn the galling chain in the depths of a gloomy dungeon without the most distant idea of ever being permitted to ascend to the light of day, should be told that a way of escape had been provided which was secure from pursuit and that he was required only to follow the leadings of his informer, what strength of joy—what enthusiasm would swell his soul as he immediately made ready for his departure! And shall not the glad tidings from heaven to the soul of a dying sinner revive the decaying energies of his nature? Even the angels evinced their joy in the redeeming work

of God. "Glory to God in the highest, peace, good-will towards men!" (Luke 2: 14.) Alas! what would have become of man, if he had been left to fill up the measure of his days without an object of hope upon which to fix his affections!

Do you ask, with incredulity, how can God's law be sustained if he saves those who have broken it? Or, *How can a broken law be repaired?* I answer, it can only be done by a *vicarious atonement*. Some one must take the sinner's place. The law condemns you to death for your sins—now some one, of sufficient qualifications, must assume the debt which you have long owed to God. He must take upon himself the responsibility of settling the demands of the law. There can be no other way. *The sword of justice MUST fall.* The sentence of the law must be executed. There may possibly be a transfer of exposure to punishment from you to some one else. In no other way can you be quit of the punishment which now hangs over you.

Who then, my brother, is competent to the high task of atoning for the sins of men? There are many opinions on this question, some of which I shall mention in order that your mind may be forever set at rest in regard to their strength or weakness. All believers in a revelation made by God, agree in this, that Jesus of Nazareth, whose history is contained in the New Testament, was either the efficient or instrumental agent in accomplishing an atonement for sin. They all believe that his appearance on earth—his life—his sufferings and his death were, in some way, connected with human salvation. But there are wide differences of opinion in regard to the *character* of Christ—differences so important as to exclude the one class of professed believers from the Christian charity and communion of the other.

It is believed by some that the Redeemer was a *mere man*—*only* a man. Let us inquire now if an atonement for sin could have been made by him. We will sup-

pose him *perfect* in character and possessed of all those pure principles which were the original inheritance of the first man. Can *he* restore fallen men to the favour of God? Can *he* repair a shattered law? Can he, by subjecting himself to the curse which has gone forth against the sinner, bear it for him, so that it shall be removed from its rightful owner? *How* can he do this? By taking the sinner's place? By subjecting himself to the same punishment? But what more will such an act of a *perfectly holy man* effect than to set *one* sinner free. *One man* cannot surely stand in the place of *more than one man*. Now would God suffer a *sinner* to escape from justice and inflict punishment upon a *perfectly holy man*? There are two reasons why he would not do this. One is, that he sees his own image in the face of the substitute and he cannot deface it. He cannot inflict punishment upon one who has ever loved him and given him his best affections. Another reason is, his character would not, by such an event, be

justified if he should save the sinner. He has pledged his word that the *sinner* shall die. He made no reserve in favour of the sinner, as that he might escape, if he could obtain one to supply his place. Men would inquire, what has become of God's truth? They would be unable to see any justification of his character in the fact that he inflicted punishment on an *innocent* man *in order to set a guilty wretch* free. Besides, as we have seen, *one* holy man could take the place of *only one* sinner even if such substitution were permitted. If Christ, then, was a man—a mere man—he was not competent to the work of atonement. His sufferings and death would not be available in reconciling the world unto God or in justifying the act of God in saving any sinners from eternal death. If he was a mere man, you can hope for no advantage from his death.

Another class of professed believers in Revelation admit that Christ was more than a mere man—they acknowledge him

to be higher than the angels—even the highest *created* being in the universe. Those who hold to this opinion are usually denominated *Unitarians* although that term includes many of the *former* class of believers. Can then Christ, considered in *this* light, accomplish an atonement for sin?

Are not the difficulties in this case as great or greater than in the other? Here is a being, more glorious than the highest archangels, yet a *creature* of God, manifested in human flesh—living a life of reproach and misery—and submitting at length to the death of the cross. He does this *voluntarily*, when he might have remained in his glory, chanting his songs of praise to God and being filled with the joys of His presence. O! it was love that induced him to come down from heaven—to suffer—to bleed and to die! What philanthropy! What enthusiasm of love! to exhibit such condescension that man might be saved! But, my dear brother, what *other* feeling is mingled with our admira-

tion of his holy philanthropy ? Is not here a *sufficient* sacrifice ? Is not God now justified in saving sinners whom he has doomed to death eternal ? Will He not heed the condescension—the love—the sufferings—the sympathy—of the noblest and best of His creatures ?

Alas ! alas ! There is no comfort here ! 'Tis but the voice of *love* that addresses the *compassion* of God ! 'Tis the plea of *mercy* only, which the sufferings of *such* a being presents ! Is *justice* satisfied ? Has she put up her sword in its scabbard ? No ; she holds it uplifted over the sinner still.

Such a being, as we are now supposing Christ to have been, can have *no more* holiness than it is necessary for him to have in order to sustain *his* place in the ranks of the heavenly hosts. He can spare *none* for the dying sinner. His sufferings and death would be derogatory to the character of Jehovah. Though He has a perfect right to do what he *will* with His own, yet he *will* never inflict punishment upon one

who is not guilty. He says himself, “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” Nor would the death of such a being show the *love of God*. It would show a love for sinners in the mind of the *substitute*, but *not* in the mind of *God*. It would not show a regard to the honor of His law—it would not *convince* the world, that God loved justice, *because, it would imply no sacrifice on His part.*

I will illustrate my meaning to make it more intelligible. An individual is brought before a king, who has broken a law to which a severe penalty is annexed—viz: the loss of both his eyes. The fact of his having broken the law has been clearly proved so as to leave no room for doubt. The king orders the sentence to be executed. At this moment, a person, who has conceived a strong affection for the criminal, offers to submit to the penalty himself on condition of a pardon for the other. What impressions now would spectators have in regard to such a substitution as is here proposed? They would

be *affected* by such a *generous exhibition* of love to the criminal in the proposed substitute. Suppose, then, the king should ask their opinion of the proposal, and whether he had better consent to it, would they not all, to a man, exclaim against it? Would they not all say, Let the *real* criminal bear *his own* punishment? In their view, *could* the conduct of the king be justified if he should cause the sentence to be executed, according to request, upon any other than the true culprit? And if he felt as he *should* feel, would he not say to the man, who so kindly offered to lose *his* eyes that his *friend's* might be preserved to him, "I cannot spare your services who have ever obeyed my laws and have been a pattern of obedience to others? I can better spare his, who has rebelled and introduced confusion into the kingdom? Besides, my word is pledged, and your standing in his place, instead of justifying *me* in releasing him from punishment, will render it necessa-

ry for me to justify myself in condemning you, an innocent person."

So the case would be in reference to God, if He should receive, as a substitute for the sinner, *any created being, however high*. Such a substitute would avail nothing in regard to the sinner's salvation. The character of God would suffer if he should consent to it. His law—so strict—so unrelenting—would utter its sanctions in vain.

In short, there is nothing striking—nothing that meets the mind—nothing that enobles the law and exhibits the dignity and glory of God—in *such* a scheme of redemption. There is in it, on the contrary, a lowering down of the rigid principles of truth—there is a *seeming show* of regard to law *without the reality*. It does not satisfy a mind oppressed with a sense of guilt and longing for relief. You would not feel, my brother, like going to such a person for pardon and peace. There is a *want of greatness* in the work of redemp-

tion as professedly accomplished by a creature of God, endued, as he might be, with supernatural power and glory. Your soul would be ever agitated with doubts as to his *ability* to save. You would never rely on his power nor trust yourself upon the ocean of eternity without a more undoubted support—a surer refuge. I shall, in my next letter, endeavor to solve the difficulty—the seeming difficulty—in the way of a sinner's salvation.

Your affectionate brother,

LETTER VI.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

In my last letter, I affirmed that a way of escape was open to the condemned sinner from the execution of his sentence. I then examined some opinions in regard to the mode of the sinner's salvation by a substitute—as that of a *perfect man* or a *super-angelic being*. I trust you were convinced that *no* created being *could* have taken the sinner's place so as to transfer the sentence to himself, and prevent its infliction upon the guilty; and that such a theory solves none of the difficulties with which your mind has been pressed. No; my brother, rely not on such dangerous—such fatal opinions. There must always be a *restlessness* in the minds of all who embrace them.

You may be desirous, then, to inquire, “Who *can* stand in my place—in the place of all dying sinners?” I answer, God! “*God manifest in the flesh!*” *He* and *He* alone could have accomplished the work of man’s redemption. And *He* has actually accomplished it! But Oh! how mysteriously *He* wrought in its execution! Adore, my dear brother, the riches of the grace which induced Jehovah to stoop so low from His high throne to save such sinners as you and I!

In dwelling upon this scheme of Redemption—a scheme worthy of its glorious Designer—I can touch only upon a few points in its history. As the scripture expresses it, “*He* saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor; therefore His arm brought salvation unto Him, and His righteousness, it sustained Him.” (Isa. 59: 16.) “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3: 16.)

The Bible, in many parts of it, describes God as existing in *three Persons*—to which mode of existence there is no human analogy. Nor can we *conceive* of such a thing for the very plain reason that we have not *now* the senses by which we can *perceive spirit*. As we have no conception of the nature of spirit, we can know nothing of the *mode* of its existence. This is a matter of *pure Revelation*, which it is not the province of *reason* to impugn. To these three Persons in the Godhead, the terms, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are affixed in Scripture in reference to the work which They *have* accomplished and are *still* to accomplish. It was the Son to whom was committed the work of atonement. He left the throne in the heavens and descended into a bodily form. He “was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory the glory as of the only Begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1: 14.)

I need not set down the history of His life on earth, as you may read it in the

four Gospels expressed in more affecting language than any I can employ. It is sufficient to say that He suffered much from the rage of his enemies and from the suspicions of his friends. After passing through about thirty years of reproaches and privations and trials of which we can form little conception, He finished his work of atonement by crucifixion on the hill of Calvary. Oh ! what agony He endured in the garden of Gethsemane, when borne down with the weight of a world's sins He sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground ! And who can conceive the anguish that swelled His holy soul as the wicked men, whom He came to save, nailed Him to the cross and pierced Him with a spear ! There "He bare our griefs and carried our sorrows." (Isa. 53: 4.) There He bore upon his shoulders the guilt of a rebellious and hell-deserving world ! Thy sins, too, and mine were there ! For He looked down the interval of years between us and Him and knew every sin we should commit and

made expiation for them there! And when amidst the darkness of sympathizing nature, He exclaimed, "It is finished!" (John 19: 30.) and gave up the Ghost, then it was that earth and heaven and all created beings exclaimed, "Let man be saved, for Thou hast paid the ransom!"

And was not the law—the stern, unyielding law of God—*maintained*? Was it not *honored* by such a costly sacrifice? *Could* it demand a more precious victim than the *Son of God*? The *Author of the law* has taken the sinner's place and received the curse upon Himself, rather than dishonor and destroy the efficiency of it by omitting to exact the penalty, of the transgressors.

The *object* of the penalties of the law was *to secure obedience*. If no atonement had been made, and those penalties had not been inflicted on sinners, the law would have been rendered inefficient. But *now* sinners will not take license to break the commands of God, merely because they see that its penalties have not

been *invariably* imposed. They see in the condescension and incarnation and death of the Son of God, in order to justify Him in saving the guilty, an awful result of a violated law. "What!" will be the feeling of the heart, "Must the Infinite God connect Himself with corrupt humanity, and, in that mysterious connection, pass through sufferings and through the grave, that the sanctions of His law may not be annulled? It is, then, a fearful thing to break the law of God, backed by such sanctions!"

The sinner, who has ever thought upon the *way* of reconciliation between him and God—upon the sacrifices made to open it—will feel that no particle of license is afforded to sin by the justification which God gives to the repenting and returning soul.

Satisfaction has indeed been made by the death of Christ for the sins of those who come to Him in faith. The door of salvation is now open to admit all the

descendants of Adam who may wish to enter.

It is impossible to show, by an illustration, the power given to the law by the sacrifice of Calvary. But the *nature* of the influence imparted to it may be seen imperfectly in the following facts of history :—

An ancient king made a law that if any individual should be guilty of a certain specified crime throughout his dominions, he should be deprived of both his eyes. His own son was soon after proved to be a transgressor of this law and the *first* transgressor. The sympathies of the father were excited. He loved his son. If the sentence of the law were executed upon him, his usefulness would be at an end. The thought too, that he must *himself* issue the orders for the execution of the sentence upon his own son, was heart-rending. His enemies supposed that the father would spare his son and thus he would be under the

necessity of abolishing the law and weakening the strength of his government. What did the unhappy father do? He caused the executioner to put out *one* of his eyes. Will not this satisfy the law? Will not men see that the king intends to put the penalties of the law in full execution? No; the *whole sentence* must receive its fulfilment. The king, to show that the law could not be broken without incurring its *full* penalties, *causes one of his own eyes to be put out!* Here he manifested a father's sympathy and love, and, at the same time, his *determination* to maintain the sanctions of his law. Nor would his subjects venture to transgress a second time, *because* the *first* transgressor did not receive the punishment in full which was threatened. They would not hope to escape in such a case. Was not the king *justified* in the view of all his subjects, in forbearing to exact the *whole* of the sentence? Was not the *object* of the sentence accomplished as much as it

would have been if the full penalty had been inflicted?

Now, much more was the *object* of the *Divine* law secured by the substitution of an *Infinite* Being in the place of *created* and sinful beings—to bear their guilt and to suffer *Himself* the infliction of the penalty due to *them*. The law stands uninjured still. It still demands obedience and its penalties are still terrible to those who incur them. No one expects to escape the sentence of death on account of any past forbearance of God.

Thus I have described the only foundation of a sinner's hope, an atonement made by Jesus Christ, "who, *as to his humanity*, was descended from the Israelites, but who was, in fact, THE SUPREME AND EVER BLESSED GOD!" (Rom. 9: 5.) If his blood had not been shed, you could never have hoped *rationally* for salvation. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins," is the affirmation of the Bible. And John says, "The blood of Je-

sus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1: 7.) These passages show that there is no other foundation of hope than Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. If he had not died *none would* have lived. *Because* he has died *all may* live.

How wonderful the ways of God ! They are past finding out ! Who would have thought that such a plan would have been devised for the sinner's salvation ? What one redeeming quality did man possess, fallen as he was in rebellion and guilt ? What did God behold in him that he should love him and work so mysteriously to raise him up from his ruins ? God did, indeed, " commend His love to us in that, *while we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us !" (Rom. 5: 8.)

But I have not ventured to say, I wish you fully to understand, that the atonement—the glorious atonement *has* secured your salvation. It has *not* secured it, unless something has been done on your part. The death of Christ places you in a state of probation from which state Ad-

am fell ; i. e. it has opened a door through which *all who are so disposed* MAY pass and find mercy and be heirs of endless blessedness.

But there are *conditions* to be complied with on your part and on every sinner's part, before you can receive benefit from the atonement. The door is wide open that leads to happiness and ultimate salvation ; but still it is true that if you are disposed to continue where you are, you will perish. Millions, doubtless, go down to death notwithstanding Christ died. And millions more *will* go. Strange that dying souls will not seek after life—that when all things are ready they will not come !

Some criminals are confined in a dungeon awaiting their execution. The order arrives from the magistrate for their freedom on a few simple, easy, and proper conditions. All *may* accept the offer and live. But some reject the conditions and are executed. Strange infatuation !

Your affectionate brother,

LETTER VII.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

The sufferings and death of Christ, I remarked in my last letter, have removed every obstacle to your reconciliation with God which resulted from the original threatening that the sinner should surely die. They rendered it *possible* for you to be saved. But the *benefits* of this atonement *will be conferred on those only who fulfil certain conditions*. The object of this letter is to state and explain those conditions.

One condition is that you repent of your sins. I have, in a previous letter, attempted to convince you of your *duty* in this respect—that it is the duty of every one to be heartily sorry for the wrong he has done. But I now affirm not only that it

is your *duty*, but that it is *necessary* to your salvation.

The nature of repentance has been already explained and its utter inefficiency to *atone* for sin. Your sorrow for having broken the law does not repair it. But since Christ has effected an *atonement* for sin, God *requires* no *satisfaction* from the sinner as a condition of mercy. He does, however, require the transgressor of His law to repent sincerely of his guilt and to turn from his evil ways and from his unrighteous thoughts. And He has made it a requisition without complying with which no sinner can ever find mercy. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

If you are heartily grieved on account of having sinned against God, you may hope that God will receive you *for the sake of Christ*. But, then, your penitence must be the result of a clear sense of the wrong you have done, not of a confident assurance that it will issue in your salvation.

Many persons suppose that they can

repent at any moment of their lives and, therefore, delay the work till some future time. Now, although it is strictly true that they will ever have the *power*—the *natural ability*—to repent, yet it is extremely improbable that they will be *disposed* to repent, after repeatedly deferring it till a future period. There are multitudes of examples to show the extreme danger of such delays, both as it respects *opportunities* for repentance and as it respects the *disposition*. Many have become so hardened through the influence of sin as to be apparently unsusceptible to any serious impressions. Let those who are disposed to delay repentance, expecting to find a better opportunity or time, remember that repentance is not an act of the *will*, but a particular *state* of mind which does not depend on the will except remotely, and they will see at once that delay is dangerous.

You may, doubtless, by earnestly contemplating the connexions of your sin with the great interests of the universe and with

the glory of God, be led to *feel* your guilt and to be in that *state* of mind which is properly termed repentance. But the *will* has nothing more to do with it than to determine upon the use of the means by which this penitent state of the mind may be induced. It is not, therefore, strictly proper for me to tell you to *resolve* to repent. But I may tell you to *feel* your guilt—to *be sensible* that you are a sinner and to *be* sorry for it. It is wholly a matter of *feeling* not of *will*.

If you ask me, therefore, *how* you must proceed in order to obtain a penitent mind, I can give you no other direction than *that* you have often received from the pulpit; “Go to the garden of Gethsemane and to the cross of Calvary, and there view the results of your rebellion and guilt! And when you think of the greatness of Him who suffered there, and that your own sins helped to weigh Him down with untold anguish, if you do not feel your guilt and turn away from it forever, the evidence is clear that your soul is in im-

minent danger of being eternally lost!" Oh! it would seem as if the blood of atonement would melt into contrition every soul! If, my brother, you ever feel your guilt and are led to forsake it, it will doubtless, be at the foot of the cross, when you are fixing your eye upon the spectacle of a bleeding, dying Saviour. Yes, "He was exalted to the cross *to give* repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5: 31.)

There is, moreover, *another* condition of salvation which you are required to fulfil. It is contained in the following passage of Scripture; "God so loved the world that he gave His only Begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth* in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3: 16.) In this passage you see not only that Christ died, but that He died *to save them who believe*, and, by inference, *them only*. Faith, then, is essential to salvation. As I have already said, God does not now require, in order to salvation, perfect obedience to His law, al-

though its *claims* to our obedience are as imperative as ever, but He has required that which is more congruous to our fallen nature, "repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord, Jesus Christ." Acts 20: 21. A broken law we cannot repair, but, with God's help, we *can repent and believe*. *What is, then, faith in Christ?*

You must not suppose that to believe Christ to be divine, is *faith* in Him; nor is it faith in Him to believe that such a Being once lived incarnate on earth, and that He suffered many years and was, in the end, crucified by those He came to save. Such a simple belief in a *historical fact* is not what the gospel requires under the name of *faith*. *Faith* is of more extensive signification. The English word does not express *all* the meaning of the Greek from which it is translated. But as it was *designed* to express all that is included in the original word it is proper that we should so understand it.

Faith in Christ, then, includes a full and hearty belief in His character as repre-

sented in the bible, and a *confidential committal of one's self to His divine guidance—a throwing one's self upon Him in perfect confidence.*

You see, my dear brother, that the *heart* must be interested, or faith is not genuine. You are required to believe in Christ as your only Saviour and to receive Him as the object of your supreme affection. Love to the world is inconsistent with such an affection for Christ. Unless you have thus received Christ, your speculative faith is utterly vain. He will be satisfied only with your heart—your whole heart. You must so commit yourself to Him as to feel yourself wholly at his disposal—ready to be guided by Him and to follow Him wherever He leads the way. This is the only way in which you can give practical evidence of living faith.

Let me illustrate these remarks by a familiar example.

A traveller is benighted on an intricate and dangerous road full of pitfalls and lined with bye-paths. He dares not ad-

vance or retire lest he should fall or be led astray and be destroyed. In this situation he is overtaken by a man who professes to be perfectly acquainted with the way. He receives from him the most satisfactory evidence that what he professes is true. The traveller perceives, in his new acquaintance, a *sure* guide. He is perfectly assured of his kind interest in his own preservation. He acknowledges him to be every way qualified to undertake his rescue and to conduct it to a successful issue. "Well then, (says the stranger) take my arm—confide in my ability and disposition to extricate you from your difficulties—be guided wholly by me and I will conduct you safely through this dangerous pass." The traveller hesitates. He says to himself, "He is certainly a competent guide—He will do as he says—I believe all this—but I am unwilling to be guided by him. I am resolved to act independently and I hope I shall get through safely." The kind stranger passes on his way;—the travel-

ler is bewildered and lost. Now of what use was his *speculative* faith in the stranger's ability and disposition to do him a favor? Of no possible use. If his faith had been *effective* or *practical*—if he had thrown himself upon the kind offer of his friend and accepted gratefully his proffered assistance, he would have been saved from a melancholy death.

Now, my brother, you see what I mean when I say that your *speculative* faith in Christ will not save you. Christ has proved to you his perfect ability and readiness to act as your guide to eternal blessedness. He has an intimate knowledge of the way for He has himself passed it and consecrated it. He only requires you to throw yourself upon His arm *confidentially* and to be guided by Him, and He promises to bear you safely through the desert of life to the everlasting verdure and glory of heaven. If you simply believe that He *can* save you—if you only acknowledge that he is *willing* and *ready* to save you, it will be of no avail. You

must have confidence in His power and will, and, moreover, you must commit yourself to His *actual guidance*—following wherever He leads and you will be safe.

And why should you not be willing to lay aside your confidence in an arm of flesh and commit yourself wholly to the guidance of Jesus Christ? You have seen, from a former letter, that nothing, which you can do, will, in the least, alter your eternal destinies as an independent act. Here now is an offer, freely made by Jesus Christ, that if you will repent of having sinned against Him and commit yourself to His care and guidance, He will bring you to His heavenly rest. These are the *only* conditions He requires—they are simple and easy. Oh! how simple when we consider the greatness of our guilt!

The sufferings and death of Jesus have made it consistent with the strictness of God's law that He should save such as He pleases. He requires now only repentance and faith in the sinner in order to his sal-

vation. He promises that if you will obey these requirements, the penalties of a just law shall be averted from you and that He will treat you hereafter in the same manner as if you had never broken the law, *Christ having borne its curse for you*, (Gal. 3: 13.) Oh! then, my dear brother, come at once to the Saviour with penitence and *cast yourself* CONFIDENTIALLY *upon him*, pledging yourself to be His forever.

Your affectionate brother,

LETTER VIII.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

I have already explained the principles on which the atonement of Jesus Christ will be effectual in securing your salvation. You have seen, however, that the hearts of natural men are exceedingly prone to evil—that they are wholly corrupt. Now, although the way for your escape from *sin* and the *results* of sin, is open—although Christ has died to secure to you the inestimable privileges of salvation—yet the tendency of your affections is towards earthly things—downwards. The fact—the simple fact—that Jesus Christ has died to secure pardon for the penitent and believing sinner, is not sufficient of itself to bring the work to a successful issue. The heart is too hard. The

soul is under the power of sin, and is so influenced by the great adversary of man that it will never alone and unaided rise from its ruins. It has the *power* to cast itself on God confidentially and find salvation, but it has not the *will*, the *disposition*—so to do. It may, upon the conviction of its sin by the conscience which God has implanted in every man, struggle to rise above, to overcome its tendencies to sin, but in vain till aided by another and a higher Power.

Here, then, as if God was determined to pour all His blessings upon self-ruined man and to leave him *no* excuse for remaining in his guilt, the third person of the Trinity offers His aid. The Holy Spirit presents Himself to the heart of every sinner and knocks for admittance. He helps the sinner, who is “sold under sin,” (Rom. 7: 14.) to escape from the iron bondage.

This messenger of heaven to man continually pours light upon the dark path of the benighted wanderer and directs

him in the way to eternal life. Ever since the ascension of our Saviour He has operated on the hearts of the unregenerate, leading them quietly and calmly to view the consequences of sin and the ingratitude to God which it evinces. And with His aid thousands and millions have been changed in the temper of their minds and have accepted Jesus Christ in faith and with true penitence for sin. He is even now silently, like the "still small voice," (1 Kings 19: 12.) that conversed with Elijah on Mount Horeb, speaking to the impenitent and pointing them to Christ crucified for them. You have heard of the extensive revivals which prevailed during the past year, and you yourself witnessed the religious awakening as it was called in C——, where you resided. Now those revivals and this awakening were the result of the Holy Spirit's influence on the minds of those who were particularly interested in them. All the great revivals which have occurred since Christ's time, were His work.

God has, therefore, furnished you, my brother, with aid competent to the successful accomplishment of the great work before you. You will never repent and embrace Christ in faith, till you are assisted by this Divine agent. Still your repentance and your faith are *your own*. *The Spirit cannot repent for you—He cannot have faith for you. They are exercises of your own mind freely put forth.* But then the special influences of the Spirit must be felt by you before you will have a *disposition* to exercise either repentance or faith.

Nor does He, by His influence on the mind, interfere in the least with your moral freedom. He exerts His influence *through the medium* of truth. The Bible was composed by men inspired by Him; consequently all its instructions—all its promises—all its threatenings—are so many addresses of the Divine Spirit to the conscience of the sinner.

And there is another influence, exerted upon the mind in regeneration by the Holy Spirit, in a manner with which we are

wholly unacquainted. We only know that the truths of scripture, faithfully presented to an audience of sinners, produce a wonderful and speedy transformation of feeling and character in some, while the minds of others are wholly unaffected. We attribute the *effective* power of those truths to the *speciality* of the Divine Spirit's influence. And this is all we know. A change occurs—we know the power that produced it—but we seek in vain for the mode in which that power was exerted. We know too, that the *sinner* is *active* in regeneration. He repents and embraces in faith a crucified Redeemer. There is, therefore, a *co-operation* of the sinner with the Holy Spirit. And this is conformable to the sentiment expressed in the following passage of Scripture; “Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you to will and to do.” (Phil. 2: 12, 13.) That is, it is He that works *with* you both in the *willing* and in the *doing*.

Many objections may be made to this

statement of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's agency, but I think every humble and conscientious Christian will agree with me that it is *substantially* correct.

From these remarks, then, you see that even the atonement does not secure *necessarily* the salvation of every sinner, and that the promise, made to the impenitent, of salvation upon repentance and faith in consequence of the atonement, may be of no avail, because repentance and faith will never be exercised till another power comes in to the sinner's aid, co-operating with him both in willing and in doing. And that power is the Holy Spirit.

How necessary, therefore, my dear brother, that you secure the aid—the efficient aid—of the Holy Spirit! With the natural powers of mind to repent, it is morally certain that you will never have the disposition to do it, till specially aided from above. But the assistance, you need, is within your reach—it is ready to meet your call. The Scriptures say “*To-day* if ye will hear His voice, harden not your

hearts !" (Heb. 4: 7.) "The *Spirit* and the bride say, come !" (Rev. 22: 17.) Every preparation is, therefore, made for your salvation and you are even urged by the persuasive strivings of the Spirit, to turn and live. O ! How wonderful is the mercy of God ! How long-suffering ! How prolific in blessings ! Who would have thought it ? That when we were in our sins—rebellious against his laws and kingdom—God should have made such an atonement and accompanied it with such an exhibition of continued love as is seen in the descent of the Holy Spirit ! And is not *here* a powerful reason for your submission to Him ? Is not *here* provision enough for your salvation ? Oh ! let the powerful strivings of the Divine Agent in your heart lead you to embrace with penitence and in faith a crucified Saviour.

Now, while you hear his voice gently calling upon you to lay aside your worldly affections and to give to God your heart, be resolved to obey his call. Let not his influences be quenched forever—

but cherish them; they will lead you to happiness and heaven. The Spirit will not *always* strive. You may resist Him so that He shall turn away from you and leave you, like Pharaoh, a monument of Divine indignation. I say, you *may* do it, for God has so revealed it in the Scripture. Else there were no appropriateness in the exhortation, "Quench not the Spirit!" (1 Thess. 5: 19.) Indeed it would impair your moral freedom—it would utterly destroy it—if you were not at liberty to comply with or reject the persuasions of any agent according to your pleasure. It is infinitely important, therefore, that you avoid the terrible conclusion to which a rejection of the Holy Spirit's influences would lead you. While the aid of such a powerful Agent is offered, I counsel you to accept of the aid and be at peace with God.

You cannot too soon be reconciled to God. There is danger of quenching forever the influences of God's Spirit—so that He shall strive no more, no more

persuade or excite the seared conscience. You have already felt some relentings on account of sin—the result of the divine Spirit's agency. You have looked in upon your heart and seen its deep depravity and guilt and have been led to feel that you ought to repent and exercise faith in Jesus. More than once has your conscience been awakened by the voice of the Spirit, and it has seemed as though your soul *would* be humbled before God and that you *would* accept his love. But you have not yet done so. The heart remains unchanged. The affections are yet enchained to the earth. Oh! when will you prepare for heaven? When will you love a dying Saviour? When will you cease to grieve the Blessed Spirit of God? Are you not afraid of His withdrawing His influences so that you shall be left barren and desolate? Your duty has been pointed out to you in a previous letter. It has been proved that, even if there were no hope of future felicity—no expectation of happiness—yet it would be

your *duty* to be sorry for having done wrong. But now that Jesus has died for you to make your penitence effectual and now that the Holy Spirit has been sent to strive with you and to urge you to repentance and faith, it will be, indeed, ungrateful—it will be amazing—if you still persist in unrepented sin!

Many—very many—have delayed to hear the voice of the Spirit till it was forever too late! Examples are numerous where His strivings have been silenced, and His influences quenched! But Oh, how sad the consequences! How fearful the dying bed! There was a dreadful—freezing—horror-struck complexion—a doleful crying for mercy—which it made the heart ache to see and to hear! Oh! I would not for the universe, die the death of one from whom the Blessed Spirit has taken His last departure! What dreary scenes are in prospect! And how will eternity burst in all its horrors upon his distracted and immortal soul! My dear brother, avoid, I beseech you such a doom

by escaping, as for your life, to the cross of Jesus whither the Holy Spirit would lead you. There cast yourself upon the mercy of your God, as exhibited in the blood of atonement, and all may yet be well!

Your affectionate brother,

HYMNS.

H Y M N S.

H Y M N 1.

The Exhortation.

- 1 Turn, wand'rer, from the dang'rous path
Thy wayward feet have trod ;
Long hast thou braved Almighty wrath,
Turn homeward to thy God !
- 2 Turn, wand'rer, from thy course of sin,
Thy Saviour bids thee turn ;
Sweetly He tries thy soul to win,
O try His will to learn !
- 3 Turn, for the Spirit's voice is heard
In whisp'ring notes of love,
Inviting thee to trust His word,
And seek thy rest above.
- 4 Turn, for thy Father calls, "return!"
Thy Father long forgot !
Come to His feet, and humbly mourn
That thou hast loved Him not.

- 5 Turn, wand'rer, while His mercy calls,
Oh, seek His face to-day!
Haste, 'ere His sword of justice falls!
Oh sinner, why delay?
-

HYMN 2.

The Warning.

- 1 To-day God's voice is heard
Inviting thee to come,
And the sure promise of His word
Declares, there yet is room.
- 2 To-day the Saviour sits
Upon His throne of love,
And many a guilty wretch permits
His promises to prove.
- 3 To-day, salvation's sure,
To those who seek the Lord,
And who unto the end endure
Abiding in His word.
- 4 But 'ere to-morrow's sun
Shall send his beams abroad,
Death may his fatal work have done,
And called thee to thy God!

- 5 Then where, O sinner, where,
Will thy poor spirit dwell?
Unrobed and desolate and drear,
'T will sink, unsaved, to hell!
-

HYMN 3.

The Invitation.

- 1 Come, sinner, in thy mis'ry come!
And seek thy injured God!
He calls thee from thy wand'rings home,
By His atoning blood!
- 2 Long hast thou lived without His love,
And long abused His grace,
But Jesus left His throne above,
And took the sinner's place.
- 3 How rich the flowing purple stream
That sealed His cov'nant sure!
How full His glorious pledges seem—
Forever to endure!
- 4 Come, then, O sinner, in thy guilt,
Thy Saviour calls thee, come!
The blood, which He on Calv'ry spilt,
He spilt to bring thee home.

HYMN 4.*The same.*

- 1 Now, sinner, wipe thy tears away,
And give to God thy breaking heart;
Come to His footstool, come to-day,
Before thou hear'st the sound, depart!
 - 2 Hast thou not heard His melting voice,
Utt'ring rich promises of love,
Inviting thee to make thy choice,
And sweetly calling thee above?
 - 3 O, listen to His gracious call,
Nor grieve His Blessed Spirit more!
Give Him wth cheerfulness thy all,
And thy ungrateful sins deplore!
-

HYMN 5.*The Cross.*

- 1 Behold Him, on th' accursed tree,
In anguish and in blood!
He bore these griefs for you and me,
To bring us back to God!

- 2 And wilt thou yet, O sinner, dare
The path of guilt to tread ?
Behold the clouds of vengeance there
That flash abòve thy head !
- 3 Haste thee to Calv'ry's mournful height,
'Ere yet thy day is past !
Speed, speed, O sinner, for the night
Is gath'ring round thee fast !
- 4 There with a full and melting heart,
Thy bleeding Saviour see !
Say to thy sovereign God, "I part
With all things else for Thee !
- 5 Jesus, Thou son of David, hear
My supplicating cry !
Send me a sweet release from fear,
And save me when I die !"
-

H Y M N 6.*Conviction.*

- 1 Jesus ! hear my feeble prayer,
Leans my helpless soul on Thee ;
O my Saviour ! can'st Thou hear,
Can'st Thou save a wretch like me ?

- 2 I approach thy awful seat,
Doubtful, anxious and oppressed,
Here I lie before Thy feet,
Broken-hearted and distressed !
- 3 Oh my soul ! thou canst not live !
What a Saviour I've abused !
How can He my guilt forgive,
Who have long his grace refused ?
- 4 I have heard His pleading voice,
As I passed along in sin,
Urging me to make my choice,
And His service to begin.
- 5 But I spurned the call of love—
Trampled on His blood divine !
Jesus ! can Thy pity move ?
Can I *ever* call Thee mine ?
- 6 Wretched, helpless, tempest-tost,
Saviour, to Thy arms I fly !
Thou, who cam'st to save the lost,
Save, Oh save me or I die !

HYMN 7.

The Release.

- 1 Sweetly from the upper skies
Breathes the soft and soothing strain,
"Sinner! wipe thy weeping eyes,
"All thy sins by Me are slain!
- 2 "On the cross in pain I hung
"To procure this grace for thee!
"There with grief my soul was wrung,
"There was filled with agony!
- 3 "Broken-hearted and abased,
"Thou hast cast thyself on Me;
"Sinner! I my word have passed
"From thy sins to set thee free.
- 4 "Rise and take thy crown of joy!
"Here I breathe upon thy soul,
"And the judgments I employ,
"O'er thy head shall harmless roll."
- 5 Saviour! why, O why for me
Hast Thou shown such glowing love?
Here I give myself to Thee,
Bear, O bear my thoughts above!

HYMNS.

*Christ.**(Selected.)*

- 1 Oh, could I speak the matchless worth,
Oh, could I sound the glories forth,
Which in my Saviour shine !
I'd soar, and touch the heavenly strings,
And vie with Gabriel, while he sings,
In notes almost divine.
- 2 I'd sing the precious blood he spilt,
My ransom from the dreadful guilt
Of sin and wrath divine:
I'd sing his glorious righteousness,
In which all-perfect, heavenly dress
My soul shall ever shine.
- 3 I'd sing the characters he bears,
And all the forms of love he wears,
Exalted on his throne :
In loftiest songs of sweetest praise,
I would to everlasting days
Make all his glories known.
- 4 Well—the delightful day will come,
When my dear Lord will bring me home,
And I shall see his face :
Then, with my Saviour, brother, friend,
A blest eternity I'll spend,
Triumphant in his grace.

HYMN 9.

*Heaven.**(Selected.)*

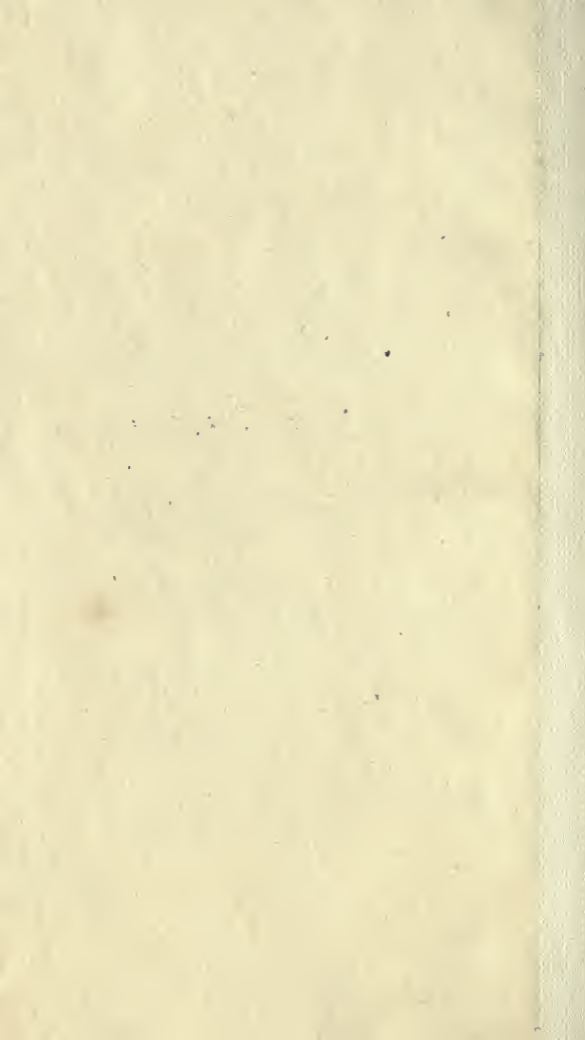
- 1 Jerusalem! my glorious home!
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labors have an end,
In joy, and peace, in thee?
- 2 Oh, when, thou city of my God,
Shall I thy courts ascend,
Where congregations ne'er break up,
And Sabbaths have no end!
- 3 There happier bowers, than Eden's, bloom,
No sin nor sorrow know;
Blest seats! through rude and stormy scenes
I onward press to you.
- 4 Why should I shrink at pain and woe!
Or feel at death dismay?
I've Canaan's goodly land in view,
And realms of endless day.
- 5 Jerusalem! my glorious home!
My soul still pants for thee;
Then shall my labors have an end,
When I thy joys shall see.

H Y M N

ON THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

- 1 There is joy in the thought that the soul shall survive
When the clay that enfolds it expires;
That its withering powers, e'en in death, shall revive
And vigor and beauty immortal, derive,
From the Spirit that kindled its fires.
- 2 It brightens our path through this valley of tears,
And scatters the clouds of despair;
The bosom of pain and affliction it cheers,
It lights up a smile on the wrinkles of years,
And smooths the deep furrows of care.
- 3 O pure are the hopes, it excites in the breast;
And the transports we feel shall increase,
When anticipation, all glowing, shall rest
On scenes that are passing in realms of the blest—
On pleasures that never will cease.
- 4 More joyous and brighter and purer the ray,
That will burst on our vision above,
When the veil, that obscures it, is taken away
And when we can look on the splendors of day,
In regions of glory and love.





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